



Bruce Lee inspires Lab employee to learn martial arts

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Laboratory employee Lawrence Garcia has been teaching martial arts in Northern New Mexico since 2001. “During this time, I’ve taught nearly 200 adults and children,” he says, noting that he taught a modified traditional style of Tang Soo Do at an Española Teen Center and later taught mixed martial arts at the Pueblo of Pojoaque Wellness Center.

He now teaches Jeet Kune Do in Los Alamos at the High Flyers Gymnastic Center on Monday and Wednesday nights. “We are unique from other schools in New Mexico—what sets us apart is the art we study: Bruce Lee’s Jeet Kune Do,” Garcia notes.

Soft-spoken and humble, intense and knowledgeable, Garcia has decades of martial arts experience, having earned instructor-level ranks (black belts) in various fighting systems.

On a path toward mastery

Garcia began studying martial arts when he was nine years old. “It was around that time that I first saw [the 1973 martial arts film starring Bruce Lee] [Enter the Dragon](#),” he laughs. “And from there I fell hook, line, and sinker into everything about the martial arts. I immediately started looking for a place to train.”

For several years, Garcia practiced Tang Soo Do, a Korean style taught at the Santa Clara Indian Reservation. During this time, he participated in various fighting tournaments, which culminated in his qualifying for the Junior Olympics.

“The tryouts for these Olympics took place in Albuquerque,” Garcia remembers. “There were schools there from throughout the state. I won first place at the tryouts, but things fell through and I wound up not competing, even though I had qualified.”

After earning a third-degree black belt in Tang Soo Do, Garcia earned another black belt in Tae Kwon Do and a brown belt in Kaju kenpo karate. He has also extensively studied judo, wrestling, Derobio escrima (a Filipino martial art that encompasses sticks, bladed weapons, and empty hands), Gaidojutsu (street kickboxing and submission wrestling), American boxing, and full-contact kickboxing.

Garcia gets emotional describing the mentor who helped him “find himself” through martial arts—and how he now feels about sharing his passion with his community as a teacher. “I was a little kid struggling to find my way when I first met martial art instructor

Juilan Shulpa at the Santa Clara Pueblo who taught me the value of discipline, respect, hard work, and belief in myself,” Garcia says. “He was one of the most selfless people I ever knew and he inspired me. The best way I know to give back to the community is to teach the martial arts that I have learned over the years.”

Discovering Jeet Kune Do

Wanting to further improve his fighting abilities, Garcia started working out at Greg Jackson’s Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) in Albuquerque. There, he studied under various practitioners, including Joey “Smokin’ Joe” Villasenor (King of the Cage world champion and one of the head coaches at Jackson’s MMA).

“I really like the mixed martial arts because they are so well-rounded,” Garcia says. “This type of fighting encompasses all ranges of combat, from kicking and punching to infighting and grappling to takedowns and fighting on the ground. I knew little about some of these ranges, so I made it my goal to become proficient at all of them.”

Garcia then discovered the art of Jeet Kune Do, which he now teaches in Los Alamos. “Put simply, Jeet Kune Do means ‘way of the intercepting fist’,” says Garcia, explaining that this fighting philosophy, developed by Bruce Lee, incorporates the best of every martial art.

“As Bruce Lee said, ‘absorb what is useful, discard what is not. Add what is uniquely your own’,” Garcia notes. “The idea is to present many techniques and let each martial artist create his or her own approach to effective self-defense.”

[Read a longer version of this profile here.](#)

Students practice ground and pound techniques at High Flyer Gymnastics in Los Alamos.

Los Alamos National Laboratory

www.lanl.gov

(505) 667-7000

Los Alamos, NM

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